Effective inservice programs

Harold Terry Ebert

University of Northern Iowa

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Copyright ©1985 Harold Terry Ebert

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/2291

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.
Effective inservice programs

Abstract
It is important to find the characteristics of effective inservice programs. First, the belief exists that professional preparation of teachers is a continuing process and self-renewal must occur if educators are to stay up with the changing needs of their students (Brimm & Tollett, 1974). Why must educators constantly make changes? One answer has been pointed out by Champagne (1980) and Wood, Thompson and Russell (1981). They suggest that as soon as educators leave their preparation programs they can expect to be effective for only five to seven years. Educators can become obsolete very quickly, thus the need for renewal to keep current with rapid change and expanding knowledge.
EFFECTIVE INSERVICE PROGRAMS

A Research Paper
Presented to
The Department of Educational Administration
and Counseling
University of Northern Iowa

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education

by
Harold Terry Ebert
August 1985
This Research Paper by: Harold Terry Ebert
Entitled: Effective Inservice Programs

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

6-28-85
Date Approved

Advisor/Director of Research Paper
James Albrecht

7-3-85
Date Approved

Second Reader of Research Paper
Norman McCumsey

7-3-85
Date Received

Head, Department of Educational Administration and Counseling
Norman McCumsey
It is important to find the characteristics of effective inservice programs. First, the belief exists that professional preparation of teachers is a continuing process and self-renewal must occur if educators are to stay up with the changing needs of their students (Brimm & Tollett, 1974). Why must educators constantly make changes? One answer has been pointed out by Champagne (1980) and Wood, Thompson and Russell (1981). They suggest that as soon as educators leave their preparation programs they can expect to be effective for only five to seven years. Educators can become obsolete very quickly, thus the need for renewal to keep current with rapid change and expanding knowledge.

Other reasons exist which suggest a need for more effective inservice programs. Due to declining enrollment, budget concerns, and teacher employment patterns, schools are finding themselves with a more mature staff (Fessler & Burke, 1983; Howey & Joyce, 1978; McLaughlin & Berman, 1977). In the past this phenomenon did not exist because new teachers with fresh ideas and approaches were constantly entering the school systems, or mobility of teachers was common. These factors helped to keep staffs more aware of change than is currently the case with today's more mature staffs.
Accountability (Champagne, 1980; Fessler & Burke, 1983) and the demand for competence, frequently in the headlines today, are concerns of the public which educators are acutely aware of. For mature staffs to be able to respond to these demands, they must remain diligent in their desire for lifelong learning.

Summarily, there is much to support the need for effective inservice programs; however, a method for developing and utilizing those programs is needed. To achieve this, one must be sensitive to those problems that have historically plagued inservice programs.

Problems

"Inservice teacher training is the slum of American education—disadvantaged, poverty stricken, neglected, psychologically isolated, whittled with exploitation, and broken promises and conflict" (Wagstaff & McCullough, 1973). While this observation may be something of an overstatement, it suggests that problems must indeed exist.

Lack of planning is one of these problems often cited (Brimm & Tollett, 1974; Byrne, 1983; Wood & Thompson, 1980) in irrelevant and ineffective inservice programs. The two adjectives are closely related. If an inservice program is irrelevant to the participants, there is little likelihood that it will be effective.
In addition to poor planning, execution of the inservice program can be a problem. Kaping and McKeag (1983) contend the time of day an inservice is implemented can affect results. Furthermore they acknowledge that "one-shot" inservice meetings have a lack of continuity and cohesion, which results in little success, even in a full-day setting.

Evaluation, or rather the lack of evaluation, is another problem (Brimm & Tollett, 1974). Without an adequate evaluation process based on feedback from participants, inservice programs will be ineffective. The total inservice process might be perceived as irrelevant to the needs of those participants for whom it was established, but in the absence of evaluation programs that fact may never be disclosed.

The perception some administrators have regarding teachers may also have an impact on inservice programs. Some subscribe to the Theory X view that teachers dislike inservice training, need to be persuaded to participate and wish to avoid the responsibility of inservice (Wood & Thompson, 1980). However, this concept is not supported by the literature devoted to inservice.

In addition, Wood and Thompson (1980) indicate inservice has often used teaching approaches which do not agree with what is presently known about adult learning.
Furthermore, they emphasize that we have not modeled the kinds of teaching practices in inservice training which we expect teachers to use in their classrooms. Often there are no clear objectives, individualization, choice of learning activities, developed responsibility, or promoted trust and concern. Finally, and perhaps most serious of all, though approximately 80% of school budgets are allocated to personnel, very little is budgeted for inservice programs. In effect, staffs are being allowed to become obsolete. How many schools would allow their equipment and buildings to become useless by failing to maintain them (Wood & Thompson, 1980)? Yet, it happens in education, and the results are serious: first, as Duke (1977) indicates, thousands of talented teachers are leaving the public schools because of the lack of regard for their professional self-improvement. Sportsman (1981) cites this same phenomenon and goes beyond that to suggest that if teachers do not leave the profession they may become involved in highly academic graduate programs, which may add to their subject knowledge but add little to their other needs of teaching. In addition, Sportsman suggests, even more importantly, teachers often do not continue to develop either educationally or professionally.
All of the problems are serious. The challenge is to recognize them and to resolve them by implementing an inservice program which responds to them.

Effective Characteristics

Six characteristics of effective inservice emerge from the literature. Such programs are marked by:

1. Positive administration leadership and commitment
2. Teacher involvement
3. Responsiveness to teacher needs
4. Appropriate presentation methods
5. Sequential and ongoing organization
6. Evaluation systems dependent on faculty feedback

Since it is difficult to completely separate these characteristics (and not entirely desirable to do so) some overlapping occurs.

Positive Administration Leadership and Commitment

Positive administration leadership and commitment is important for effective inservice programs (Byrne, 1983; Champagne, 1980; Fessler & Burke, 1983; Hall, Benninga & Clark, 1983; Jones & Hayes, 1980; Kaping & McKeag, 1983; Mangieri & Kemper, 1983; McLaughlin & Berman, 1977; Rogus, 1983; Sportsman, 1981; Wood & Thompson, 1980). To begin with, the administrators and the school board must have an appreciation of the inservice program (Byrne, 1983). If there is no commitment in the form of policy
and resources, the staff will know that they are only pawns in a game. With support from the top, the inservice program should represent a valid attempt at staff growth, and the sooner that support is gained the better.

Another benefit of positive leadership is the relationship that can exist between teacher and administrator, where the administrator is committed to help the teacher through inservice. In order to have this relationship, communication between the teacher and administrator must be developed. Rogus (1983) identifies three ways to make this possible: through day-to-day interaction with staff, through involvement of the staff in decisions about the inservice program, and through setting a good example for the staff to follow. If such communication has been established, the administrator can help the teacher determine individual needs through analysis of those problem symptoms identified by the teacher.

While the administrator must provide leadership and support, he must not become too dominant. The administration cannot be perceived by the faculty as domineering or threatening if the program is to be successful. "Staff development is first and foremost a state of mind, a commitment to the growth of others" (Rogus, 1983, p. 16).
As a leader the administrator needs to keep this caution in mind, because motivation of others is much of what leadership is about.

**Teacher Involvement**

Clearly one of the most important characteristics of effective inservice is teacher involvement (Brimm & Tollett, 1974; Byrne, 1983; Cruickshank et al., 1979; Duke, 1982; Fessler & Burke, 1983; Hall et al., 1983; Howey & Joyce, 1978; Kaping & McKeag, 1983; Mangieri & Kemper, 1983; Miller, 1977; Rogus, 1983; Ruff, 1974; Sportsman, 1981; Wood & Thompson, 1980).

Teachers need to be involved in the planning and development of inservice programs. This is essential. Committees which involve a substantial number of teachers to initiate, implement and evaluate the inservice programs are effective (Byrne, 1983). An individual teacher obviously knows, with supervisory assistance, what his or her needs are. Faculty members are more willing to participate in programs they perceive to be relevant and necessary.

Another positive feature of teacher involvement is the added credibility such programs have in the eyes of the staff who believe that their concerns are indeed being met in the programs. Cruickshank (1979) reviewed a 1974 study by the Florida Department of Education which concluded
inservice programs featuring teacher involvement in planning were more successful than those without teacher involvement.

One of the benefits of teacher involvement is commitment to the inservice program. If commitment is obtained the program should be productive. When teachers feel they are genuinely involved in part of the process, they feel an ownership and responsibility for the success of the program.

Teacher-oriented programs are distinguished by their concern for those needs identified by the staff. Once staff needs have been identified, they become the focus of inservice. This again adds authenticity and should create teacher ownership and commitment to the inservice program.

Diversity and flexibility of inservice programs are important to permit a wider variety of options for content and presentation. This leads to opportunities for individualization. Inservice programs which do not meet the needs of the participants have no value and will corrode the whole program. One presentation generally cannot apply to the whole staff. For this reason, it is necessary to offer enough diversity and flexibility to provide for the individual differences on a staff. Both
the content of the program and the methods of presentation should reflect that concern.

**Responsiveness to Teacher Needs**

The identification of needs is basic to any successful inservice program (Byrne, 1983; Hart, 1974; Lillie & Black, 1976; Westerberg, 1983). Hart (1974) emphasizes that a needs assessment must occur for the planning of goals and objectives to proceed. Effective needs assessment requires the cooperation and pooling of knowledge and resources from both administration and teachers (Brimm & Tollett, 1974; Miller, 1977; Rogus, 1983).

**Appropriate Presentation Methods**

Effective inservice programs use what research has discovered about adult learning (Wood & Thompson, 1980), which concludes that many more adults function at Piaget's concrete operational stage of cognitive learning than was previously assumed. The consequences of these findings suggest inservice programs using the learn-by-doing method are more effective. Educator-teachers prefer someone to show them how to do it rather than tell them (Miller, 1977; Reeves, 1974).

Experienced professionals should be treated differently from students preparing for careers in education or new teachers just trying to master the basics of the profession.
Mature professionals seek the integration of new knowledge with experience. They also want to combine work, education and leisure into their inservice encounters. Collegiality rather than criticism is desirable from inservice leaders (Arends, Hersh & Turner, 1978).

Hall et al. (1983) and Howey et al. (1978) both conclude that release time should be provided for inservice. Ernst (1974) and Mangieri and Kemper (1983) go further in saying the release time and session length should be convenient if inservice is to be effective. Sportsman (1981) concludes inservice should be an integral part of the teacher routine during the regular day as part of the required duties of the job.

Consultants can be, and often are, used effectively in inservice programs, but there are some conditions which must exist for optimal benefit, (Arends et al. 1978; Lillie & Black, 1976). The compatibility of the consultant and clients must be assured. If the two are not able to adapt to each other's needs and methods, the exchange will not be successful.

The use of consultants requires a lot of time and effort by both the consultant and the person or persons responsible for the development of the program, as Mangieri and Kemper (1983) and Ruff (1974) have indicated.
A feasible alternative to consultants (McLaughlin & Berman, 1977; Sportsman, 1981) is the use of local resource people. The advantage of utilizing local resource people is the close regular contact provided to the clients served.

One final aspect of presentation is the importance of proper delivery technique (Mangieri & Kemper, 1983; Rogus, 1983). Those who make presentations to teachers should be expected to model those practices which teachers themselves are expected to use in their classrooms.

Sequential and Ongoing Organization

There is substantial evidence (Byrne, 1983; Cruickshank et al., 1979; Duke, 1982; Miller, 1977; McLaughlin & Berman, 1977; Ruff, 1974; Westerberg, 1983) endorsing the effectiveness of sequential inservice programs consisting of interchangeable presentations designed for flexibility. Such programs can be developed for long-term growth rather than for the ineffective outcomes which result from one-shot, short-term programs.

Evaluation and Feedback

The need for evaluation is also clear (Bradley, 1983; Kaping & McKeag, 1983; Lillie & Black, 1976; Mangieri & Kemper, 1983; Miller, 1977; Rogus, 1983). The purpose for evaluating inservice programs is basically the same as for any evaluation, to find out if the goals and
objectives are being met and to what degree. The evaluation should provide the information needed to make ongoing plans for identifying topics and distributing resources.

Interestingly evaluation of staff during the implementation of inservice programs must be non-threatening if there is any hope for new skills to be developed. Positive and supportive feedback between the teacher and administrator is essential during initial periods of inservice.

Conclusion

Ideas about inservice have not changed drastically in the past thirty years, as Heywood (1954) suggests in the following observations about the importance of inservice:

1. Teachers need to keep up professionally in their work.

2. Teaching is an increasingly complex task.

3. Teachers today are faced with perhaps the heaviest demands ever made on them.

4. Most teachers desire to develop more effective ways of dealing with instructional problems.

These statements are just as valid today as they were thirty years earlier. However, it is unsettling that after thirty years a resolution of the inservice challenge has not been developed. In today's schools
there still exist hit and miss programs; one district may have a good program while another school a few miles away may not even have an inservice program.

It is difficult to fault Sportsman's (1981) philosophy about inservice. He recommends it be an integral part of the school program. Teachers need to continually update their skills as educators, not only in subject knowledge but also in instructional techniques. A possible way of integrating inservice into the school program may be through extended teacher contracts. This extended time would be for the instruction of teachers, not students.

Education has historically tried to adapt business methods to the school setting. Many businesses have funded continuing education programs for their employees. The companies know this benefits them because of the additional knowledge and skill attained by the employees. And, of course, the individual also gains by becoming more valuable in the eyes of his or her employer.

As the call for accountability and excellence in education continues, intensified inservice is a possible answer. Extended contracts to facilitate inservice will be difficult to attain because of the additional costs.
However, business has benefited from effective inservice; there is no reason education should not benefit from a similar approach. Education has the information available from research to provide effective inservice programs. Obtaining support and financial resources from educational patrons is the necessary link.
References

Arends, R., Hersh, R., & Turner, J. (1978). Inservice education and the six o'clock news. Theory Into Practice, 17, 196-205.


McLaughlin, M., Berman, P. (1977). Retooling staff
development in a period of retrenchment. Educational
Leadership, 35, 191-194.

Miller, W. C. (1977). What's wrong with inservice
education? It's topless! Educational Leadership, 35,
31-34.

Reeves, B. B. (1974). To change, to grow.../I/D/E/A/'s
clinical training workshops. Educational Leadership,
31, 541-544.

program: A principal's checklist. NASSP Bulletin, 67,
8-16.

Leadership, 31, 506-508.

Part I. problems and pitfalls. Curriculum Review,
307-311.


Education's disaster area. Administrator's Notebook,
21, no page.

competency based program for improving instruction.